Utility Keynotes Home Furnishings

Mabel Fisher
Iowa State College

1943

Follow this and additional works at: http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/homemaker

Part of the Home Economics Commons

Recommended Citation
Available at: http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/homemaker/vol23/iss9/4
Life in the rural Middle West is marked by a certain kind of simplicity, a frankness and honesty which comes from living close to growing things in the great, wide-open spaces.

Whether it is an adobe house on the desert, a log cabin in the Maine woods or a penthouse in New York, the young people at Iowa State learn that the kind of surroundings we create for ourselves depends entirely upon our own ideals of beauty and sensitivity to fine craftsmanship. Home is the place to which we go for rest and quiet, for inspiration and joy, for work and play. Flexible and alive? Yes, with great simplicity of form and color dominating the whole.

Simple lines are always restful to the eye and lend a certain amount of dignity to the rather informal living of today.

Home, for great masses of people, means compressing self and belongings into small spaces. This factor alone should make simplicity a "must" in the selection and arrangement of furniture and all necessary accessories. Only through increased understanding of basic principles of design and a knowledge that good forms are few but lasting, can we develop a sincere use of material. The room is really a unit in decoration. Working within this small area presents a problem in elimination. A room has two parts: the stationary part and the movable. Walls, floor and ceiling naturally form the stationary section, while furniture, draperies and all other objects form the movable.

The stationary framework is usually established for us, and it is within this area that we must express our own personality and that of the family, develop atmosphere and plan for comfort. Working within established limitations is a challenge to one's ingenuity and ability, and the results are usually more simple and beautiful. Having limitations placed upon the kind of materials used develops an honest use of those materials.

Wood is a material used and loved by people around the globe. It has been easily accessible, it is flexible to use and meets many needs. But wood, like other materials, has met with foul play in the hands of those who "must" have marble or some other foreign material instead, and camouflage was invented long before World War I was ever thought of. However, in the agile hands of the designer-craftsman, wood has survived and still speaks its own language and its innate beauty is recognized.

"Wood appeals to our senses. It is attractive to the eye, pleasing to the touch."

Wood finishes usually rob the wood of its identification and natural charm. Wood appeals to the eye but even
more to the touch. Haven’t we all seen a hand gently stroke a particularly beautiful piece of wood? It would seem then that to preserve the natural beauty of wood we should use the least amount of finishing materials in order not to lose the grain of the wood which is always so intriguing. Then there are the textures of different woods which speak their own language if allowed to do so. Obviously, the surface of the wood must be protected and preserved from dust, dirt and certain climatic changes, and this can easily be done by making many applications of wax to an unstained surface. Of course there are many good accepted ways of finishing wood but the plea is to use wood honestly and frankly, preserving the innate characteristics and qualities of each kind of wood.

The young designers who created the interesting pieces of furniture pictured here must have realized that now is the time to plan for their future homes, thinking always of convenience, efficiency and comfort. In combination with commercially made furniture, these arrangements consistently practice and preach a functional simplicity suited to a practical way of living. These small pieces of furniture have the added advantage of being easily moved from room to room as the need arises, offering versatile arrangements for small homes and apartments.

Each one of these units in room arrangements is an interesting and pleasing composition with emphasis on simplicity. Sometimes it is difficult to visualize different ways of using and placing pieces of furniture in the room, but the students who designed and made the “twin units” or shelves were not lacking in imagination. They found these units made a charming and

Originality plus a piece of glass transformed the bench below into an attractive table complementing the gold colored chair

livable setting in combination with the unusual davenport table of original student design.

Still another way of using the “twin units” was discovered by placing them together in a different position. This chair unit for the living room with the mirror reflecting a spot of interest on the opposite wall is indeed charming.

Not content with their accomplishments in using their flexible pieces of furniture in the living room, these young people moved it into the bedroom.

One of the most delightful aspects of the crafts program at Iowa State is the stress given to the relationships existing between different phases of creative work applicable to real living situations. To complete the bedroom unit, lamps were designed which were related to the need. The bedspread made of cotton sheeting with the cotton yarn applied design and the rug made from a common scrub mop available in any variety of hardware store, show the fine sensitivity being developed for making good use of common materials. Even the flower panel grew into the composition with its dull textured mat and natural wood frame constructed from finished moulding. Accessories are important in any interior design or plan.

A smart, practical work bench and stool designed to meet the needs of many people was a success in every way. A place for small tools, a small metal vise, a drawer and bench with storage space for books and magazines and plenty of knee space make this a most desirable unit of furniture. It would be an asset to any room and is particularly acceptable in the living space of small quarters. The flexible screen made of dowel rods is decorative and can be used in many ways.

It is fascinating to observe just how ingenious these young designers have been in using their furniture. A low table was needed as a part of the chair unit and a piece of plate glass laid on top of the stool borrowed from the work bench arrangement completed the picture. The student-designed pewter bowl with orange lilies, the natural color of the wood and gold colored upholstery of the arm chair, all combine to make a most satisfying composition in the room.